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ABSTRACT

A study was conducted to assess the educational needs of older adults residing in McCook Community College's service area. A questionnaire focusing on respondents' interest in courses on financial management skills, employment needs, health and health care, social interaction, and self-esteem was administered to 150 older adults. The sample included 25 individuals from the First Congregational Church, 25 from the First United Methodist Church, and 100 from the McCook Senior Center. Study findings, based on an 87% response rate, included the following: (1) at least 33% of the respondents were in favor of courses on wills, probate, and trusts; exercise; nutrition; selection and usage of health care providers; pensions and social security benefits; coping with Alzheimer's victims, and housing choices for retirement; (2) 39.7% were interested in trips and 34.3% in support groups; (3) slightly over 22% were interested in training as in-home care providers for the aged; (4) over 65% of the respondents expressed no interest in any financial management course, besides the wills, probate, and trusts course; and (5) over 75% were not interested in any of the employment needs courses nor any of the self-esteem courses. Recommendations and the survey instrument are included with the study report. (AYC)

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AN ASSESSMENT OF COURSE NEEDS FOR OLDER ADULTS
AT MCCOOK COMMUNITY COLLEGE

by
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A Practicum presented to Nova University in partial
fulfillment of the requirements for the
degree of Doctor of Education

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ABSTRACT

Since demographics indicate that the older adult (over 55) population group will continue to increase in size over the next decade, community college personnel are becoming concerned about how best to serve the needs of this group. In McCook, Nebraska, a small rural community, there was a substantial older adult population who were being minimally served by McCook Community College. Therefore, this study was conducted to assess older adult coursework needs in the MCC service area.

Several procedures were used in the assessment. A survey instrument with six categorical areas was developed by way of a careful literature review. The instrument was validated and administered to a group of 150 older adults. The sample included twenty-five from First Congregational Church, twenty-five from First United Methodist Church and one hundred from the McCook Senior Center.

Findings, based upon an eighty-seven percent response rate, were that there were nine areas favored by at least thirty-three percent of all respondents: 1)wills, probates, trusts, 2)exercise, 3) nutrition, 4) trips, 5)selection and usage of health care providers, 6) support groups for older adults, 7) pensions, social security benefits, 8) coping with Alzheimer's victims, and 9) housing choices for retirement.

Recommendations derived from the study were to 1) determine availability of funds for offering coursework, 2) establish an advisory committee, 3) recruit faculty, 4) in-service faculty appropriately, 5) offer one course for older adults during the 1990-91 year, 6) promote and market the class, 7) evaluate the coursework, and 8) use this practicum to increase general awareness of older adults' needs.

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INTRODUCTION

Over the next decade, community college personnel should become attuned to the needs of the older adult (over fifty-five) population. Smith (1986:4), in an American Association of Retired Persons publication, comments on the increasing size of this cohort:

The last of the baby-boom generation has completed full-time study. The applicant pool of 18-22 year-olds is decreasing, while the older population continues to increase. Each day in the United States, the over 65 population grows by 1,600 or almost 600,000 per year.

In noting this demographic shift, Smith and others project that the older adult student could become a significantly larger part of future community college populations.

McCook Community College (MCC) is a rural, state-assisted, two-year institution in McCook, Nebraska that offers a few non-credit classes to serve the older adult age group. Like other rural Nebraska towns of similar size, McCook has a substantial older adult population which is likely to increase because of improved health care, the demographic shifts noted earlier, and tendencies of older adults to retire in towns capable of providing more services.

As indicated, MCC had provided a few non credit classes for older adults; however, no course work needs assessment for this group had been done according to the Dean of

Community Services. Furthermore, the Dean was highly supportive of conducting such an assessment that would result in recommendations to the current administration.

Therefore, the purpose of this practicum was to assess older students' (over 55) course work needs in the MCC service area. A careful review of literature was conducted to determine how other institutions of higher education had responded to older adult course work needs. Also, the review of literature provided the conceptual framework necessary for developing an interview questionnaire. The instrument was examined and validated by persons familiar with the problem and with questionnaire development. When completed, results of the assessment were used to make recommendations regarding appropriate courses to be included in MCC's curriculum.

BACKGROUND AND SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

This practicum is related to topics examined in the Societal Factors Affecting Higher Education Seminar. Both Hodgkinson's (1985) and Fuch's (1983) works define and describe the older adult cohort that presently exists and will continue to grow in the next twenty-five years. This group, because of its increased size and improved health, will demand more services and be a much more vital part of society. Education will be one such area of demand, and when reviewing demographic data, it becomes apparent that adult education is to be the growth area in the field.

Since the purpose of this study is to assess the needs of the older adult, it is an appropriate practicum in that it is the first survey for this age group at MCC, and it should provide significant planning information for older adult course work.

Literature Review on Older Adult Needs And Colleges' Responses to Those Needs

A literature review was conducted to determine the real life needs of older adults and how community colleges have responded to those needs. As a part of this review, an ERIC Search was conducted using "older adults," "community colleges," and "two year college," as identifiers. Also, representatives from the American Association of Junior and Community Colleges (AACJC), the American Association of Retired Persons (AARP), and the League for Innovation in the Community College (League) were contacted and supplied relevant information. A conceptual foundation for the assessment instrument and process was provided through the literature review.

Six general areas of need were expressed by older adults in the literature. The first area was termed "personal business and financial information needs." Mainly, the need here was for information and understanding about related topics. In interviews conducted for Flathead Valley Community College in Kalispell, Montana, Becker (1980:3-4) noted senior citizen interest in social security programs, pensions, food stamps, veteran's benefits, rental

assistance, consumer problems, and legal assistance. This was only a partial listing, but it provided some idea of the practical kinds of information some older adults needed.

A second area, somewhat related to the previous one, involved employment needs of some older adults. Yoselaff and others (1987:1) of Middlesex County College, Edison, New Jersey, comment on the job needs they discern among older students:

It appeared that while longevity and good health for retirees were increasing so too was the loss of their jobs. Company mergers and acquisitions, increased benefits costs to employers, and the change in local industry from manufacturing to service caused displacement within this same group.

The author's comment about the shift from a manufacturing to a service economy denotes a major trend. It is likely there will be similar "displacements" in other communities across America in the years ahead.

Employment needs were also the focus of a study conducted by Neilsen and Geyer (1986:10) at De Anza College in Cupertino, California. According to Neilsen and Geyer's survey, older adults were interested in several areas: fast food industry, computers, cable T.V. production, clerical/secretarial, polling attendants, child day care services, neighborhood watch programs, and telephone solicitation.

Older adults indicated a need to remain physically mobile as being important. Forman (1986:6) of De Anza College comments on this third area of need:

Indeed physical education is probably the most beneficial educational program that older individuals

can experience because it helps them maintain their mobility and independence, two factors that greatly influence an individual's self concept.

Smith (1986:7) in the AARP publication agreed and suggested that physical education and health classes could help the older adult maintain "a sense of control of coping."

Epstein (1988:16) at Northern Virginia Community College reported survey results showing "health and travel" as being two very popular topics.

Other writers suggested that older adults often sought after social interaction, a fourth type of need. Pierce, (1980:6) writing of the Institute of Study for Older Adults, a branch of New York City Technical College, states students' "motivations for taking courses" involve a need for knowledge and social interaction. Likewise, Murphy (1980:4-5) of San Francisco's Pacific Heights Community College paraphrases another authority on the importance of social interaction: "one well-known gerontologist has stated that as important as the education itself is the sociability that takes place in the classroom."

The final two areas of need were closely related. They were maintaining positive self-esteem and having a sense of purpose and meaning in life. Of the self-esteem topic, Davisson and Rush (1981:19) observe:

Most older adults are mobile and in good health, yet many retired people experience role losses that exclude them from society. Because there are no particular goals established for older adults, they must find their own goals if they are to achieve a meaningful later life.

Also, Smith (1986:8) touches on the topic of self-esteem saying that "Intellectual and creative pursuits generate a sense of accomplishment and encourage self-esteem."

Sources in the literature suggested that having meaning and purpose in life was especially important for older adults. Within the AARP booklet, Smith (1986:7) cites a 1981 National Center for Educational Statistics survey indicating that older persons most often took courses which provided: "A continued sense of meaning (e.g., through philosophy, religion, language and literature, and art courses - 39 percent of all courses taken)." Similarly, Kazemek and Rigg (1985:6), researchers in the area of adult literacy, offer this: "More important, many elders feel the need to order and reorder their lives, to make some sense of what has happened to them." Pierce (1980:6) also comments upon this topic as it could be focused by careful study of liberal arts classes:

The student is aided in assessing the meaning of his life in relationship to what he or she knows of past history, literature, and the arts and philosophic and religious belief systems.

For many older adult learners, this need becomes significant since the tasks of doing a job and rearing a family no longer provide the sense of purpose and meaning they once did.

These, then, were at least six areas of older adult needs reflected in the literature reviewed. The six areas were the following: receiving information and help on personal business or financial matters; becoming employed

either part-time or full-time; maintaining physical fitness and mobility; interacting socially with others; maintaining self esteem; and having a sense of purpose in life. How these needs were being met is summarized in what remains of this review.

The following was a sampling of classes offered by institutions mentioned in the literature. The first grouping of classes were generated to help senior citizens with personal business and financial concerns. Course offerings at the De Anza College Senior Workshop listed in a League publication edited by Charles and Bartunek (1982:29) included "money management, health care, nutrition, and available community services." Yoselaff and others (1987:12) indicate that Middlesex County College, Edison, New Jersey offered a number of practical classes "from advocacy and health care to social security and understanding finances." Course listings for "Retirement Planning" at St. Louis Community College-Meramec included "Planning Your Retirement," "Housing Choices," "Legal Readiness," and "Financial Security" (Charles and Bartunek, 1989:35). These offerings appear to be useful for either the person who plans to retire or has already retired.

For the older adult seeking either full-time or part-time employment, training opportunities could be as close as the local community college. Indeed, this was an area of senior citizen need being met by an increasing number of colleges. Sources at De Anza College, Cupertino,

California, reported that retirees were being trained for fast food industry jobs, various types of management posts, child care positions, and in-home care providers (Charles and Bartunek, 1989:9). Aronson and Eccles (1980:27) listed three community colleges involved with job training for senior citizens: San Diego Community College's Jobs of Older Women program; Roane State Community College's Companion Health Aide Program; and Central Florida Community College's Handicraft Cooperative Program. Aronson and Eccles explain San Diego Community College's program as one which "assists women trying to enter the job market through a mentor network of business and professional women who volunteer their services." Officials at Roane State Community College highlighted a program that trained individuals 55 years and older for employment as companions of elderly persons needing assistance to remain in their home. Central Florida Community College's thrust involved helping older adults identify "income producing activities for their low income peers." As the pool of older adults increases in the years ahead, programs and offerings like those described here are likely to develop at other community colleges.

In addition, the literature contained numerous examples of increased computer course offerings; apparently, older adults enrolled in such classes for personal business and/or employment reasons. Charles and Bartunek (1989:21) highlight Rio Salado Community College, Sun City, Arizona and

its "Computer Literacy Institute" centered upon the Apple IIe. Also, these two editors reference Johnson County Community College in Overland Park, Kansas as having two older adult computer courses: "Demystifying the I.B.M. Compatible Personal Computer" and "Demystifying the Apple II Computer" (1989:25).

That some community colleges have helped adults remain physically active was evidenced several places in the literature. In 1981, Forman of De Anza College wrote "Adapting Physical Education Curriculum for the Older Adult." In his report, he asserts "traditional Physical Education Curriculum does not meet the needs or consider the physical limitations of the older student" (Forman, 1981:1). In their League publication, Charles and Bartunek (1989:9) list "Adaptive Physical Education" as a continuing campus offering at De Anza College, perhaps evidence of Forman's influence. Likewise, these same editors include a listing for Delta College in Michigan which states, "Dance-exercise and swim therapy courses are constant and well attended, regardless of great competition from many sources in the area" (1989:11). St Louis Community College's offerings are described in this manner: "A variety of physical fitness and recreational activities are provided for older adults" (Charles and Bartunek, 1989:23). Last, Epstein (1986:16), writing of course offerings at Northern Virginia Community College Alexandria Campus, lists "'It's Never Too

Late to Commit to Fitness'" as a course which has been taught.

Social interaction, the fourth need, no doubt has been addressed by many of the classes previously described. This would be especially true of those courses which prepared older adults for either volunteer or remunerated service to child care facilities and rest homes. Epstein (1988:16) cites a course at Northern Virginia Community College which was perhaps designed with the socializing function in mind, "Volunteering: Benefiting Yourself and the Community." Also, some courses in the "New Mature Woman" program at Rio Salado Community College, Sun City, Arizona had socialization inherent in them: "Assertiveness Training," and "Human Sexuality for Mature Adults" (Charles and Bartunek, 1989:33). Besides these courses, Rio Salado also provided half-day conferences on "Communication" and "Relationships" among other topics.

Like social interaction, self-esteem, the fifth need, has surely been accomplished through many of the classes previously described. Of the literature surveyed, self-esteem appeared to be central to many of Rio-Salado Community College's offerings. They listed half day conferences in "Beauty" and "Self-Esteem." Also, they have offered courses such as "Improve Your Appearance," "Eliminating Self-Defeating Behavior," and "Single Again" (Charles and Bartunek, 1989:33).

In several articles, writers expressed the need older adults have for a sense of purpose or meaning in life. Courses in literature and art have helped the older adult discover new meaning in life. In an article "Tithes: Poetry and Old People," Kazemek and Rigg describe team-teaching a creative writing of poetry class at a senior citizen's center (geographic location not given). Of senior citizens, these authors say, "many elders feel the need to order and reorder their lives, to make sense of what had happened to them" (1985:6). In reordering and making sense of what has happened, the participants wrote about: "The same kind of universals that poets have always written about: birth, death, love, joy, sorrow, family, and humankind's relationship to something greater than itself, be it Nature or God" (Kazemek and Rigg, 1985:6).

Along somewhat the same lines, instructors note that art classes have helped to enhance self-esteem and have fostered purpose and meaning for senior citizens. Davisson and Rush, in their article, "Older Adults as Art Students: An Unrealized Clientele for Community Colleges," comment about the visual arts and older adults: "Participation in art classes can help them to find identity and to acquire a positive self-concept" (1981:19). The authors included photos of older adults painting oil and watercolor pictures at a senior citizen's center in Tucson, Arizona which suggested their observations were based upon actual teaching experience. Drawing on their experience, these same authors

assert that finding meaning in the arts for older adults became "an integral factor in their survival" (1981:19). So, whether it be through literature, art, or some other discipline, older adults have and will continue to discover new meanings and purposes in life, needs which for most do not wane with age.

In this analysis, needs of older adults were identified through a careful reading of selected pieces of literature. Also, it appeared that some community colleges were meeting the personal business, physical fitness, social interaction, self esteem, and sense of purpose needs of this population. In the years ahead, it is possible that other community colleges may begin to serve more completely the needs of older adults. Community college leaders should carefully consider the demographic information:

Assuming a retirement age of 65, older persons can expect to live an additional 16.8 years. By the year 2000, persons over 65 are expected to represent 13 percent of the population and if current trends prevail, the only population group experiencing significant increases in the next century will be more than 55 years of age (Smith, 1986:4).

PROCEDURES

Several procedures were used to complete the study:

1. A search of appropriate literature was conducted to provide a framework for the study.
2. A transmittal letter and questionnaire were completed (see Appendices A and B).
3. Several administrators were brought into the

questionnaire development process to assure a valid and reliable tool for collection of data.

4. Deans of Community Services at MCC and Mid-Plains Community College in North Platte and a school psychologist validated and attested to the reliability of the questionnaire.
5. A sample of 150 older adults in McCook completed the questionnaire that was distributed in this manner: First Congregational Church - twenty-five, First United Methodist Church - twenty-five, and the McCook Senior Center - one hundred. This process allowed for maximum generalizations to be made.
6. Church samples were completed first. Interviewees' names were recorded and numbered so that after two weeks follow up phone calls could be made to assure at least a seventy-five percent response rate. Each interviewee received a pre-addressed, stamped envelope to improve chances for return.
7. To eliminate duplications, a list of church interviewees was provided to the Senior Center administrator.
8. Results were analyzed using descriptive statistics.
9. A report was given to MCC administrators upon completion of the practicum.

Limitations

One of the limitations of this assessment involved the sampling procedure. Since a random sampling technique was not used, the results must be viewed as having a limited and local application. Hence, the assessment outcomes, conclusions, and recommendations should not be generalized to other postsecondary institutional situations.

Also, actual implementation of practicum recommendations may be limited by budget considerations or by lack of available faculty. In the event that funds and faculty are available, courses developed need to be confined to the older adult target group.

Assumptions

Two assumptions were of significance. For purposes of data analysis, it was assumed adults who marked "interested" and "very interested" could be viewed as a potential student grouping. Second, any topic receiving at least forty-three favorable responses (when combining "interested" and "very interested") was assumed to be significant since this would represent thirty-three percent (rounded to the nearest percent) of the total.

Definitions

The following definition is provided to eliminate any confusion on the part of the reader: most sources examined

in the literature review defined "older adult" as any person fifty-five years or older.

RESULTS

An interest inventory survey was given to a sample of 150 older adults in the manner described earlier. Of the 150 adults, 131 responded which generated a response rate of eighty-seven percent.

What follows is a series of tables which depict the results of the survey. The survey instrument contained six categories of assessment; hence, there are six tables. In each table, there is the number and percentage of adults who responded either V (very interested), I (interested), or N (not interested) for each topical area. Each topic appears in ranked order with the topic receiving the highest percentage sum total of V and I responses appearing at the top of the table, the one receiving the next highest sum total below it and so on. The number of respondents in each horizontal series (V I N) equals 131, and the percentage equals 100.

Table 1 contains data which indicate greatest older adult interest in "wills, probates, and trusts." Respondents also showed significant interest in "pensions, social security benefits" and "housing choices for retirement." Respondents revealed some interest in topics four through eight, though not as much as in topics one through three.

Table 1
Number and Percentage of Responses
to Financial Management
Skills Category

Topic	Very interested		Interested		Not interested	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
1. Wills, probate, trusts	26	19.8	35	26.7	70	53.3
2. Pensions, S.S. benefits	19	14.5	26	19.8	86	65.7
3. Housing choices for retirement	9	6.8	34	25.9	88	67.3
4. Legal assistance	13	9.9	29	22.1	89	68.0
5. Taxes	14	10.7	27	20.6	90	68.7
6. Retirement financial planning	11	8.4	24	18.3	96	73.3
7. Money management	7	5.3	28	21.4	96	73.3
8. Consumer problems	6	4.6	28	21.4	97	74.0

Table 2, a table concerned with respondent's employment needs, has data suggesting older adult interest for training in-home care providers for the aged. Slightly over twenty-two percent (combined V and I) of all respondents indicated interest in such training. Just over twenty-one percent of those surveyed showed interest in learning more about clerical and secretarial topics, and close to twenty percent of respondents were interested in custodial and

cleaning service training. There appeared to be only mild interest in topics four through six.

Table 2
Number and Percentage of Responses
to Employment Needs Category

Topic	Very interested		Interested		Not interested	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
1. In-home care providers for the aged	6	4.6	23	17.6	102	77.8
2. Clerical, secretarial, computers	7	5.3	21	16.0	103	78.7
3. Custodial, cleaning services	5	3.8	21	16.0	105	80.2
4. Early childhood education	5	3.8	14	10.7	112	85.5
5. Fast food industry	3	2.3	9	6.9	119	90.8
6. Child day-care services	1	.07	9	6.9	121	93.03

Health care information is the focus of Table 3, and respondents revealed significant interest in learning about exercise, nutrition, selection and usage of health care providers, support groups for older adults, and coping with Alzheimer's victims. Topics numbered one through five received combined V and I percentage totals of thirty-three

percent or better. It is noteworthy that topics six through ten received marks indicative of at least moderate interest.

Table 3
Number and Percentage of Responses
to Health and Health Care
Category

Topic	Very interested		Interested		Not interested	
	NO.	%	NO.	%	No.	%
1. Exercise	11	8.4	45	34.4	75	57.2
2. Nutrition	11	8.4	43	32.8	77	52.8
3. Selection and usage of health care providers	11	8.4	34	25.9	86	65.7
4. Support groups for older adults	12	9.1	33	25.2	86	65.7
5. Coping with Alzheimers victims	12	9.1	31	23.7	88	67.2
6. Coping with living alone	10	7.6	32	24.4	89	68.0
7. Medication education	9	6.9	32	24.4	90	68.7
8. Mental health education	8	6.1	29	22.1	94	71.8
9. Counseling services available	5	3.8	29	22.1	97	74.1
10. Cooking for one person	9	6.9	25	19.1	97	74.0

Table 4 contains responses to the learning area, "socializing." Older adults indicated significant interest

in the "trips" topic with almost a forty percent (combined V and I) favorable response. "Cards, table-top games" and "volunteer work options" also received more favorable rankings. Respondents showed mild interest in topics four through seven.

Table 4
Number and Percentage of Responses
to Socializing Category

Topic	Very interested		Interested		Not interested	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
1. Trips	17	13.0	35	26.7	79	60.3
2. Cards, table-top games	8	6.1	33	25.2	90	68.7
3. Volunteer work options	10	7.6	30	22.9	91	69.5
4. Forums on political and civic concerns	4	3.0	33	25.2	94	71.8
5. Performing arts events	4	3.0	27	20.6	100	76.4
6. Interpersonal communication skills	7	5.3	23	17.6	101	77.1
7. Reading groups	6	4.6	21	16.0	104	79.4

The fifth Table has data summarizing responses to subject matter which would enhance self esteem. "Leadership development skills" and "American literature" gained some favorable ratings though the percentages are somewhat lower

than those listed for topics with similar rankings in other categories ("Trips," for example). Respondents displayed fair interest in topics three through five.

Table 5
Number and Percentage of Responses
to Self-Esteem Category

Topic	Very interested		Interested		Not interested	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
1. Leadership development skills	9	6.8	21	16.0	101	77.2
2. American literature	6	4.6	21	16.0	104	79.4
3. Psychology courses	5	3.8	22	16.8	104	79.4
4. World literature	5	3.8	20	15.3	106	80.9
5. Sociology courses	6	3.8	18	13.7	107	82.5

Purposeful living is the learning activity focus of Table 6. Topics one through six received combined V and I percentages of twenty percent or better, with "hobbies" and "computer familiarity" ranked number one and two respectively. Older adults showed mild interest in topics seven through twelve.

Table 6
Number and Percentage of Responses
to Purposeful Living Category

Topic	Very interested		Interested		Not interested	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
1. Hobbies	8	6.1	30	22.9	93	71.0
2. Computer familiarity	9	6.8	28	21.4	94	71.8
3. World history	6	4.6	26	19.8	99	75.6
4. Painting	7	5.3	26	19.8	98	74.9
5. American history	8	6.1	20	15.3	103	78.6
6. Writing your autobiography	6	4.6	21	16.0	104	79.4
7. Creative writing for older adults	8	6.1	18	13.7	105	80.2
8. Understanding new electronic technologies	4	3.0	22	16.8	105	80.2
9. Making material folk crafts	5	3.8	20	15.3	106	80.9
10. Oral history for older adults	4	3.0	21	16.0	106	81.0
11. American literature	8	6.1	16	12.2	107	81.7
12. Day-care provided by older adults	2	1.5	17	13.0	112	85.5

It was determined, through an analysis of the subjects receiving the highest favorable percentages from all six tables, that there were at least nine significant areas of

interest. In each of the areas, at least thirty-three percent of the total respondents favored the option. The topics and percentages were as follows:

1. Wills, probates, trusts	46.5 percent
2. Exercise	42.8 percent
3. Nutrition	41.2 percent
4. Trips	39.7 percent
5. Selection and usage of health care providers	34.3 percent
6. Support groups for older adults . . .	34.3 percent
7. Pensions, social security benefits .	34.3 percent
8. Coping with Alzheimer's victims . . .	32.8 percent
9. Housing choices for retirement . . .	32.7 percent

DISCUSSION, IMPLICATIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The six tables contain somewhat unexpected information as well as much useful information. Unexpected information came in the form of the large number of "not interested" (NI) responses for each of the broad categories. In no instance were the number of actual responses above the median number of sixty-five and one-half (N=131) in any topical area. One possible explanation for the large number of negative markings may be inferred from general knowledge of the respondents' backgrounds. McCook is a community with many retired farmers and working class people for whom the notion of college coursework might not be entirely comfortable.

However, each of the tables does have data indicating some areas of adult interest. This is especially true for subjects ranked near the top. In preparing the rankings, it was assumed adults marking "interested" and "very interested" could be viewed as a potential student grouping, hence the combination of percentages and rankings according to combined percentages as indicated in the "Results" section of this practicum.

Certain implications became evident as a result of this practicum. First, there was a potential group of older adult students. While the group was not large in size, it was of significance. While some of this group may have participated in a few classes prior to this time, greater efforts to organize and promote older adult classes based on this assessment would seem appropriate.

If the MCC administration would seriously consider serving this group, then other implications follow. The most important of them involves making funds available and establishing an advisory committee to formulate goals and make recommendations about courses to be offered. The administration would then need to be involved in determining locations suitable for delivery of coursework, providing instructional staff sensitive to older adult learning styles, and marketing the classes to attract the target group.

All recommendations except number five derive from the literature review and conversations with knowledgeable individuals. Recommendation number five was specifically drawn from the results of the assessment. The recommendations were as follows:

1. The ability to provide some funding for older adult course work must be determined by the administration.
2. To assist decision making and goal setting about coursework including in which of the nine identified areas to offer classes, an advisory committee must be formed. The initial advisory group should be composed of the Dean of Community Services, the McCook Senior Center Administrator, the Administrator of Hillcrest Nursing Home, MCC's Dean of Instruction, the ministers of the two churches which participated in the assessment, the president of the local AARP group, and two interested older adult volunteers.
3. MCC's administration should recruit faculty to deliver appropriate coursework.
4. The administration needs to promote staff development activities which prepare faculty to teach older adults. Consideration must be given to older adult learning styles.
5. For the 1990-91 academic year, at least one designated "older adult" class should be offered.

This class should be based on one of the nine topics identified as being significant in the "Results" section of this practicum.

6. There must be adequate marketing and promotion of this special type of course to attract the desired population.
7. An evaluation of the pilot class or classes should be done by administrators and the advisory committee. The purpose of this evaluation will be to determine the feasibility of continuing further coursework.
8. This practicum should be used as a means by which to raise the awareness of the need for older adult classes among faculty and key administrators.

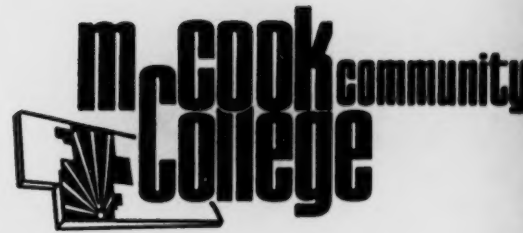
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APPENDIX A
TRANSMITTAL LETTER



March 8, 1990

Dear Adult Learner:

McCook Community College has the responsibility of serving many different age levels within McCook and the surrounding area. As you probably know, MCC has many students who are not the "traditional" eighteen year old students who have recently graduated from high school.

In an attempt to serve better the needs of older adults (fifty-five and older), a questionnaire has been developed. Information gathered from the questionnaire will be used to help college administrators and faculty members design courses that would be of benefit to older adults.

Would you please take a few minutes to complete the survey and then return it in the pre-stamped envelope by April 30, 1990.

Thank-you for your cooperation and prompt attention.

Sincerely,

Ford M. Craig
Administrative Assistant
English and Education Instructor
McCook Community College

Enclosure 1

APPENDIX B
INTERVIEW QUESTIONNAIRE

Questionnaire
Interest Inventory To Assist in Curriculum
Planning for the Adult Learner at McCook Community College

I. What courses related to older adults would you take at McCook Community College?

A. Area: Financial Management Skills

Please circle one response per item.

V= very interested, I= interested N= Not interested

- | | | | |
|---------------------------------------|---|---|---|
| 1. pensions, Social Security benefits | V | I | N |
| 2. wills, probates, and trusts | V | I | N |
| 3. taxes | V | I | N |
| 4. legal assistance | V | I | N |
| 5. retirement financial planning | V | I | N |
| 6. money management | V | I | N |
| 7. housing choices for retirement | V | I | N |
| 8. consumer problems | V | I | N |

B. Area: Employment Needs (to help secure work)

- | | | | |
|--|---|---|---|
| 1. fast food industry | V | I | N |
| 2. clerical/secretarial/computers | V | I | N |
| 3. child day-care services | V | I | N |
| 4. in-home care providers for the aged | V | I | N |
| 5. custodial, cleaning services | V | I | N |
| 6. early childhood education
(teacher's aids) | V | I | N |

C. Area: Health and Health Care

- | | |
|--|-------|
| 1. exercise | V I N |
| 2. nutrition | V I N |
| 3. mental health education | V I N |
| 4. coping with Alzheimers victims | V I N |
| 5. medication education | V I N |
| 6. selecting and using health care providers | V I N |
| 7. coping with living alone | V I N |
| 8. support groups for older adults | V I N |
| 9. counseling services available | V I N |
| 10. cooking for one person | V I N |

D. Area: Socializing

- | | |
|--|-------|
| 1. trips | V I N |
| 2. volunteer work options | V I N |
| 3. interpersonal communications skills | V I N |
| 4. reading groups | V I N |
| 5. performing arts: choir, dance, theater groups | V I N |
| 6. forums on political issues and civic concerns | V I N |
| 7. cards, table-top games | V I N |

E. Area: Self-Esteem

- | | |
|----------------------------------|-------|
| 1. leadership development skills | V I N |
| 2. world literature | V I N |
| 3. American literature | V I N |
| 4. sociology courses | V I N |
| 5. psychology courses | V I N |

F. Area: Purposeful Living

1. American history	V	I	N
2. American literature	V	I	N
3. world history (within your lifetime)	V	I	N
4. creative writing for older adults	V	I	N
5. becoming familiar with the computer	V	I	N
6. painting (watercolor, oil, etc.)	V	I	N
7. understanding new electronic technologies	V	I	N
8. oral history for older adults	V	I	N
9. making material folk crafts	V	I	N
10. day-care provided by older adults	V	I	N
11. hobbies	V	I	N
12. writing your autobiography	V	I	N

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JUN 21 1990